



PROCESSED PRODUCTS BRANCH PLANT SYSTEMS AUDIT (PSA) PROGRAM

What it can do for you.

The Plant Systems Audit (PSA) Program provides an unbiased third party audit of a processor's quality assurance system. The frequency and scope of the audits provided under the PSA Program can be tailored to meet an applicant's needs. Processed Products Branch (PPB) audits are conducted during actual production and product quality grading can be included as part of the audit service. This voluntary user fee auditing service is available upon request and can allow a firm, as the applicant, to gain objective information about a supplier. Processors may also request these services to gain an objective assessment of their own operations.

The Audit Program.

The PSA Program determines how effectively a processor's quality assurance system is working. The quality audit includes in-process observations and an audit report which documents all findings. During an audit, PPB reviews a processor's Food Safety Controls, Quality Management Systems, Personnel policies, Good Manufacturing Practices / Sanitation, Pest Control, Packaging / Labeling / Inventory practices, and Recall / Return program.

In each area covered, PPB determines whether: (1) The processor is performing necessary procedures, inspections, and tests identified in their quality assurance program; (2) The results of inspections and tests are documented; (3) The system includes corrective action in the event of a non-conformance or test failure; and (4) Corrective action is taken and documented. Each of the above areas are assigned a numeric score with the highest possible score being 1,000.

The audit also includes a review of sanitation conditions during an audit and examines the plant's ongoing sanitation program. Plant premises and any conditions which could contribute to pest or dust problems are examined, as are plant pest management records. Receiving areas, processing areas, water supply, and warehouse and storage facilities are examined closely for potential sources of product contamination. Areas of the plant which provide for the safety and comfort of employees are also checked.

The PPB auditor is accompanied by a representative of plant management during the plant tour, and areas of concern are brought to the representative's attention. Frequently, corrective action can be taken immediately. Problems, which cannot be corrected quickly, are brought to the attention of management for later evaluation.



Reporting Results.

PROCESSED PRODUCTS BRANCH PLANT SYSTEMS AUDIT (Continued)

At the conclusion of the Audit, an exit interview is conducted with plant management to present and discuss the audit findings. A detailed report will be mailed to the applicant along with a certificate that displays the rating of the audit.

The PPB audit report will include a list of any deficiencies observed in each area of the plant. The report describes how well a processor's quality assurance system is working. It will also include information on sanitation deficiencies noted during the audit, including product compliance. It can provide recommendations for improving the overall quality system. Improvements noted after the first audit will be documented in subsequent audit reports.

For More Information.

To apply for services or to obtain additional information on the Plant Systems Audit Program, please contact:

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Agricultural Marketing Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
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1400 Independence Avenue, SW
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Or visit our web site www.ams.usda.gov/fv/ppboffices.html for a list of offices.

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